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## First 11 Dimock homes sampled by EPA show no health concerns

By Laura Legere (Staff Writer)

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The first 11 Dimock Township water supplies tested by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency did not reveal levels of contamination that could present a health concern, but the samples indicated the presence of arsenic and other compounds that will require further tests at some homes, the agency said Thursday.

Agency officials hand delivered test results to residents whose wells were sampled during the week of Jan. 23 and will meet again with the families individually to review the results and answer questions.

The first test results reported Thursday represent about a sixth of the data collected by the EPA over weeks of sampling in a nine-square-mile area of Dimock where the agency is investigating the potential impact of nearby natural gas drilling on water supplies.

In a statement Thursday, the EPA said samples from six of the 11 homes showed concentrations of sodium, methane, chromium or bacteria, but all were within the safe range for drinking water. The sampling results also identified arsenic in two homes' water supplies, both of which are being sampled again by the agency.

"Although the (arsenic) levels meet drinking water standards, we will resample to better characterize the water quality of these wells," EPA spokesman Roy Seneca said in the statement.

Three of the 11 homes tested during the first week of sampling are receiving replacement water deliveries from the EPA. Those deliveries will continue "while we perform additional sampling to ensure that the drinking water quality at these homes remains consistent and acceptable for use over time," Seneca said.

The agency began testing about 60 water wells in January after the EPA's review of past tests by the state and other groups raised concerns about contamination from Marcellus Shale drilling.

Seneca said that the agency will share more test results with Dimock homeowners "as further quality assured data becomes available for the remaining homes."

The statement released by the EPA did not include a complete list of the compounds detected in the first 11 water supplies.

In the test results given to the families, the EPA highlighted compounds found at concentrations that exceeded what the agency described as "trigger levels" based on risk-based screening levels or the standards for public drinking water supplies.

Although all of the results were reviewed by a toxicologist before they were presented to residents, compounds above a trigger level were reviewed sooner by toxicologists and processed quicker by the agency "should we need to take an immediate action to provide water," Seneca said.

"EPA conducted those reviews and found no health concerns," he said.

Dimock resident Scott Ely said his test results showed five compounds above their trigger levels, including arsenic, chromium, lithium, sodium and fluoride. The arsenic level in his well water, 7.6 micrograms per liter, was below the federal drinking water standard of 10 micrograms per liter but above the 3 micrograms per liter chronic drinking water screening level for children established by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry.

Ely, who has three small children in his home, said the results reveal "nothing surprising: my water is contaminated."

The number of compounds in his water well that triggered an expedited toxicological review "just confirms that we have issues," he said.

The natural gas industry said that the results confirm that their operations have not affected drinking water.

George Stark, a spokesman for Cabot Oil and Gas Corp., the firm drilling extensively in the

township, said the company is "pleased that data released by EPA today on sampling of water in Dimock confirmed earlier findings that Dimock drinking water meets all regulatory standards."

He said that the company will continue to work with the EPA as well as state and local regulators to address concerns in Dimock, but he chided federal regulators for intervening in the case.

"We hope that lessons learned from EPA's experience in Dimock will result in the agency improving cooperation with all stakeholders and to establish a firmer basis for agency decision making in the future," he said.

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